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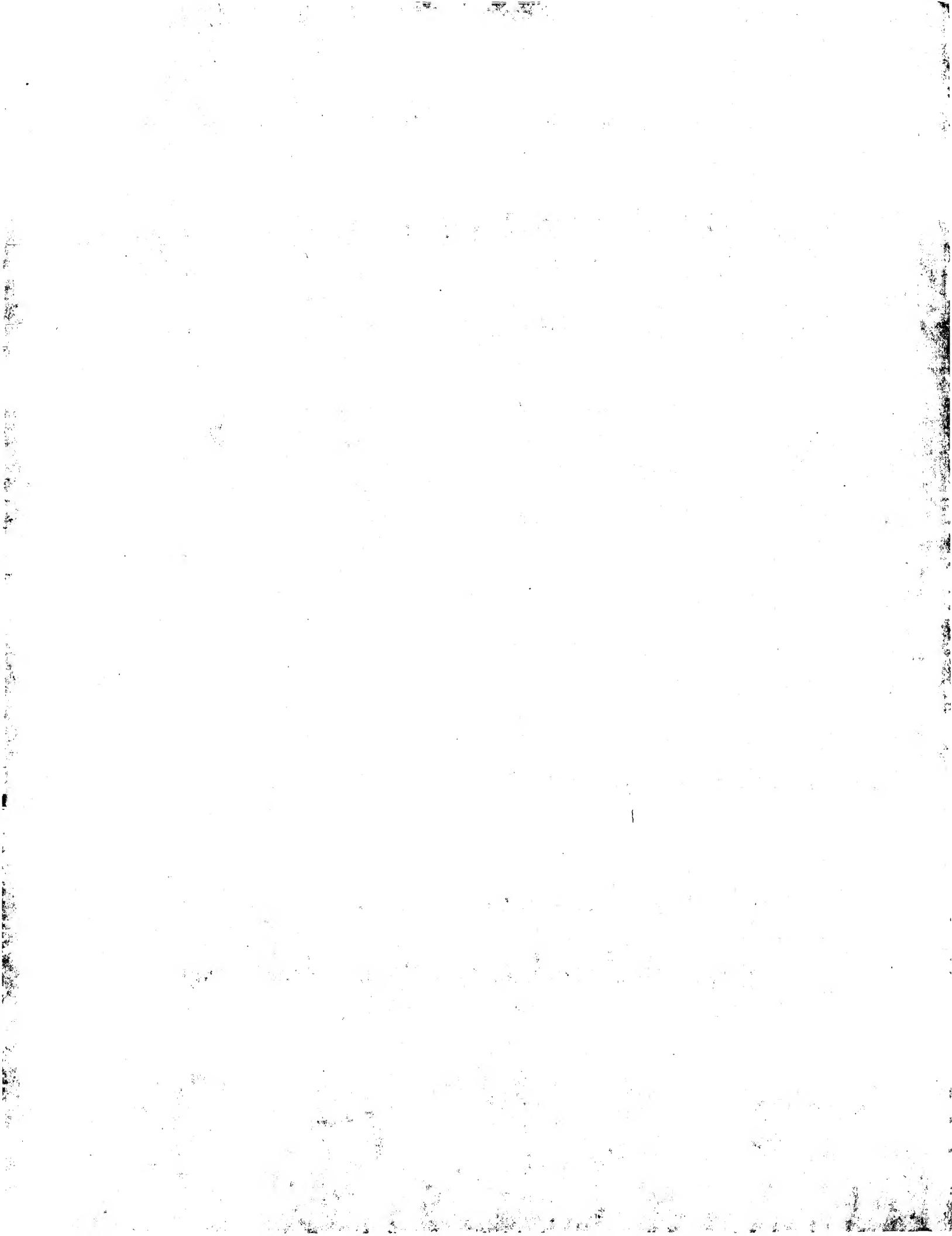
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09/381,508	09/21/99	3629	\$1,074.00	1749-258	2	15	6

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Applicant(s) PAUL DAVID METCALFE, PETER CULTER, UNITED KINGDOM.

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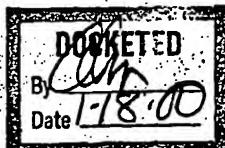
FOREIGN APPLICATIONS- UNITED KINGDOM 9705928.1 03/21/97
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TITLE

EXPANDABLE SLOTTED TUBING STRING AND METHOD FOR CONNECTING
SUCH A TUBING STRING

PRELIMINARY CLASS: 285



DATA ENTRY BY: ORDOÑEZ, MARTA TEAM: 11 DATE: 01/12/00

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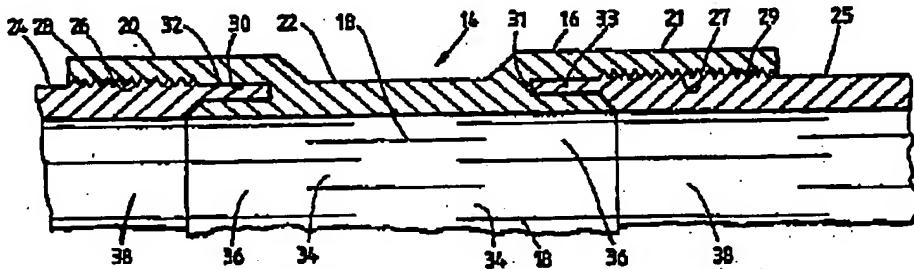
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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

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<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB98/00863</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 20 March 1998 (20.03.98)</p> <p>(30) Priority Data: 9705928.1 21 March 1997 (21.03.97) GB 9723338.1 4 November 1997 (04.11.97) GB</p> <p>(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): PETROLINE WELLSYSTEMS LIMITED (GB/GB); Offshore Technology Park, Clisymore Drive, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen AB23 8GD (GB).</p> <p>(72) Inventor; and</p> <p>(75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): METCALFE, Paul, David (GB/GB); North Wing, Bucklebury Steading, Peterculter AB14 0NP (GB).</p> <p>(74) Agents: McCALLUM, William, Power et al.; Cräckbank & Fairweather, 19 Royal Exchange Square, Glasgow G1 3AE (GB).</p>			
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(54) Title: EXPANDABLE SLOTTED TUBING STRING AND METHOD FOR CONNECTING SUCH A TUBING STRING



(57) Abstract

An expandable tubing assembly comprises a tubular connector (16) defining overlapping longitudinal slots (18), the connector (16) comprising end portions (20, 21) and an intermediate portion (22). The slots (18) extend over the whole length of the connector (16), but the only slot overlap occurs in the intermediate portion (22). The assembly further comprises lengths of expandable tubing (24, 25) defining overlapping longitudinal slots (12) and having end portions defining nodes (38) between and beyond the ends of the tubing slots (12). Tubing threads (28, 29) are formed on the end most tubing nodes. The connector end portions define threads (26, 27) and are coupled with the threads (28, 29) formed on the nodes of the respective end portions of the tubing lengths.

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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO.	INTERNATIONAL FILING DATE	PRIORITY DATE CLAIMED
PCT/GB98/00863	MARCH 20, 1998	MARCH 21, 1997
TITLE OF INVENTION "EXPANDABLE SLOTTED TUBING STRING AND METHOD FOR CONNECTING SUCH A TUBING STRING"		
APPLICANT(S) FOR DO/EO/US Paul David Metcalfe		
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U.S. APPLICATION NO. (If known, see 37 C.F.R. 1.50)	INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION NO. .PCT/GB98/00863	ATTORNEY'S DOCKET NUMBER 1749-258	
17. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The following fees are submitted:		CALCULATIONS	
Basic National Fee (37 CFR 1.492(a)(1)-(5)): Neither international preliminary examination fee (37 CFR 1.482) nor International search fee (37 CFR 1.445(a)(2)) paid to USPTO and International Search Report not prepared by the EPO or JPO.		PTO USE ONLY	
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slots overlap, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap;

5 coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing such that the fingers of the sleeve are longitudinally spaced from the endmost fingers of the tubing lengths; and

10 forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and tubing lengths.

15 As used herein, the term slots is intended to encompass slots which extend through the walls of the sleeve and tubing, slots which extend only part way through the walls and any other appropriate weakening of the walls such as lines of bores or scallops.

20 Preferably, the connecting means are provided at circumferentially spaced locations at the end of the tubing lengths beyond the endmost tubing fingers, and at the ends of the sleeve beyond the respective endmost tubing fingers. The connecting means may comprise pins, rivets, screws and the like for location in appropriate aligned bores provided in the sleeve and tubing lengths. Single fasteners may be provided beyond each tubing finger, or multiple fasteners may be provided.

25 Preferably also, the unexpanded sleeve is of larger diameter than the tubing lengths. Most preferably, the sleeve and the tubing length are each of substantially constant diameter along their length.

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According to a still further aspect of the present invention there is provided an arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing, the arrangement comprising a longitudinally slotted sleeve, first and second tubing lengths defining overlapping longitudinal slots, in use the tubing lengths being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, and connecting means for connecting the sleeve to the ends of the tubing lengths.

10 The sleeve may be in the form of longitudinally extending strips of metal. Most preferably, the strips are rectilinear. On expansion, the strips of the sleeve move radially outwardly and separate circumferentially. Initially, that is prior to expansion, the strips may be circumferentially connected, by frangible links such as wire, webs of material or one or more welds, to facilitate sleeve handling.

15 The invention further relates to a method for coupling the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, the method comprising the steps of:

20 providing a sleeve comprising longitudinally extending strips of material;

25 coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing; and

forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and tubing lengths.

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Preferably, the connecting means are provided at circumferentially spaced locations at the end of the tubing lengths beyond the endmost tubing fingers, and at the ends of the sleeve. The connecting means may comprise pins, rivets, screws and the like for location in appropriate aligned bores provided in the sleeve and tubing lengths. Single fasteners may be provided beyond each tubing finger, or multiple fasteners may be provided.

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Preferably also, the unexpanded sleeve is of larger diameter than the tubing lengths. Most preferably, the sleeve and the tubing length are each of substantially constant diameter along their length.

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These and other aspects of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the 15 accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a sectional view of a length of expandable tubing, shown in an expanded configuration;

Figure 2 is a sectional view of an expandable tubing assembly in accordance with a first embodiment of the 20 present invention;

Figure 3 is a schematic plan view of an arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a sectional view of Figure 3; and

Figure 5 is a schematic plan view of an arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention;

25

Reference is first made to Figure 1 of the drawings,

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which illustrates a length of expandable tubing 10. In its initial configuration, the tubing 10 is simply a length of pipe in which a series of longitudinal slots 12 have been machined. Applying a radially outward force to the tubing wall, by passing a mandrel through the tubing, causes the tubing to expand such that the slots 12 become diamond-shaped openings.

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The tubing 10 is supplied in lengths suitable for transportation and handling and these are joined to one another on surface to create a tubular string. The assembly 14 illustrated in Figure 2 of the drawings allows lengths of expandable tubing 10 to be connected to form a string, as will now be described.

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The assembly 14 comprises a tubular connector 16 defining overlapping longitudinal slots 18, the connector 16 comprising end portions 20, 21 and an intermediate portion 22. The slots 18 extend over the whole length of the connector 16, but the only slot overlap occurs in the intermediate portion 22.

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The connector 16 is utilised to join the ends of two lengths of expandable tubing 24, 25, the ends of which are adapted to engage with the connector end portions 20, 21 as described below.

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The connector intermediate portion 22 is of substantially the same wall thickness as the tubing 24, 25, however the connector end portions 20, 21 are upset, that is they include portions of greater wall thickness than the tubing 24, 25 and are of a greater diameter than the tubing

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24, 25. The inner walls of each connector end portion 20, 21 define threads 26, 27 for engaging corresponding threads 28, 29 on the outer surface of the tubing 24, 25. Inwardly of the threads 26, 27 the end portions 20, 21 define 5 grooves 30, 31 to receive corresponding tongues 32, 33 provided on the ends of the tubing lengths 24, 25.

As noted above, the connector slots 18 only overlap in the intermediate portion 22, such that on expansion of the connector 16 and the tubing lengths 24, 25 the connector 16 10 is only subject to significant deformation in the intermediate portion 22, at and adjacent the slot overlap 34. The amount of deformation is substantially lower in the rest of the connector 16, particularly in the "nodes" 36 between the ends of the longitudinally aligned slots 18. 15 The tubing lengths 24, 25 feature nodes 38 between and beyond the ends of the tubing slots 12 and the tubing threads 28, 29 are formed on the end most tubing nodes.

In use, the tubing lengths 24, 25 are connected by first making up the connector 16 to one tubing length 24, 20 and then making up the second tubing length 25 to the other end of the connector 16. A number of tubing lengths are connected in this way to form a tubing string, which is run into a wellbore. Once in a desired position, an expansion 25 mandrel is run through the tubing string, and radially extends the connector 16 and the tubing lengths 24, 25. In doing so, the connector slots 18 and tubing slots 12 are expanded to define diamond shaped openings, as are illustrated in Figure 1. As described above the connector

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is only subject to substantial deformation at the slot overlaps 34, such that the metal of the slot end portions 20, 21 is subject to minimal deformation. As the deformation of the metal of the connector occurs primarily in the intermediate portion 22, which is of corresponding diameter and thickness to the tubing 24, 25, the expansion properties of the connector 16 are similar to the tubing 24, 25, such that the connector 16 and tubing lengths 24, 25 will expand in corresponding and predictable manner, minimising the occurrence of irregularities in the internal diameter of the expanded tubing string.

From the above description it will be apparent to those of skill in the art that the assembly 14 provides a convenient means for connecting expandable tubing lengths. It is recognised that, for some applications, users may prefer to include coupling means between the connector end portions and the tubing lengths in addition to the thread connection, and in such cases screws, rivets, pins or the like may be provided to extend between the end portions 20, 21 and the tubing lengths 26, 27.

Reference is now made to Figures 3 and 4 of the drawings which will illustrate an arrangement 50 for connecting first and second lengths 52, 54 of expandable tubing utilising an expandable sleeve 56 secured to the ends of the tubing lengths 52, 54 by screws 58. The tubing walls 60, 61 and the sleeve wall 62 define overlapping longitudinal slots 64, 65, 66. Expansion of the tubing lengths 52, 54 and the sleeve 56 is accommodated by

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deformation of fingers of material 68, 69, 70 where the slots 64, 65, 66 overlap, and following deformation the slots 64, 65, 66 define diamond-shaped apertures. During expansion there is little or no deformation of the nodes 72, 73, 74 between the longitudinally spaced slots 64, 65, 66, and the screws 58 pass through bores in the endmost nodes 72, 73, 74 of the tubing lengths 52, 54 and the sleeve 56, at the ends of the tubing lengths 52, 54 and sleeve 56. Thus, the endmost deformable fingers of the tubing lengths 68, 69 are axially spaced from the endmost fingers of the sleeve 70.

In use, the tubing lengths 52, 54 and sleeves 56 are shipped in disassembled form. The tubing lengths 52, 54 are made up on surface as the tubing is fed into the bore in which the tubing is to be utilised. In particular, the ends of the tubing lengths 52, 54 are located in the respective ends of the sleeve 56. The screws 58 are then located and tightened in the screw bores. A number of tubing lengths are made up to provide the desired length of tubing and the assembled tubing run into the bore. On reaching the desired location downhole, the tubing is anchored in place, and an expansion cone then pushed or pulled through the tubing. The cone expands the tubing length 52, 54 radially outwards such that, as mentioned above, the slots 64, 65, 66 become diamond-shaped, with the expansion being accommodated by deformation of the fingers 68, 69, 70. The sleeve 56 deforms in a similar manner to the tubing lengths 52, 54. On moving through the

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arrangement 50, the expansion cone deforms, in turn, the endmost fingers 68 of the first tubing length 52, the fingers 70a at the first end of the sleeve 56, the fingers 70b at the second end of the sleeve 56, and finally the 5 endmost fingers 69 of the second tubing length 54.

In testing it has been found that the forces required to expand the connecting arrangement 50 are the same or only slightly higher than the forces required to expand the tubing lengths 52, 54. Also, the expanded sleeve 56 tends 10 to retain its expanded form, and suffers little or no diametrical shrinkage after the expansion cone has passed through the sleeve 56. Thus, the present invention avoids the difficulties experienced with previously proposed 15 sleeve connectors. Further, the connection arrangement 50 is less expensive to produce than the male\female connectors as described in WO96\37687 and WO97\21901.

Reference is now made to Figure 5 of the drawings, which illustrates an alternative arrangement 110 for connecting first and second lengths 112, 114 of expandable 20 tubing utilising an expandable sleeve 116 secured to the ends of the tubing lengths 112, 114 by screws 118. The tubing walls define overlapping longitudinal slots 124, 125. However, unlike the first described embodiment, the sleeve wall is formed of individual longitudinally 25 extending strips 126. Expansion of the tubing lengths 112, 114 and the sleeve 116 is accommodated by deformation of fingers of material 128, 129 where the slots 124, 125 overlap, and circumferential separation of the sleeve

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strips 126. Following deformation the slots 124, 125 define diamond-shaped apertures. During expansion there is little or no deformation of the nodes 132, 133 between the longitudinally spaced slots 124, 125, and the screws 118 pass through bores in the endmost nodes 132, 133 of the tubing lengths 112, 114 and the ends of the sleeve strips 126.

It will further be apparent to those of skill in the art that the above-described embodiment is merely exemplary of the present invention, and that various modifications and improvements may be made thereto, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

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CLAIMS

1. An expandable tubing assembly comprising:
a tubular connector defining overlapping longitudinal slots and comprising slotted end portions; and
5 lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and having slotted end portions defining nodes beyond the ends of the slots, the connector end portions being coupled to the nodes of respective end portions of the tubing lengths.
- 10 2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the connector end portions and the nodes of the tubing end portions are threaded.
- 15 3. The assembly of claim 1 or 2, wherein the tubular connector further comprises an intermediate portion between the end portions.
4. The assembly of claim 3, wherein the slots extend over the whole length of the connector, slot overlap occurring only in the intermediate portion.
- 20 5. The assembly of claim 3 or 4 wherein the intermediate portion is of corresponding configuration of the tubing lengths, such that the expansion characteristics of the connected tubing assembly are substantially constant over

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the connection.

6. The assembly of claim 5, wherein the connector intermediate portion is of substantially the same wall thickness of the tubing and wherein the connector end portions are upset.

7. The assembly of claim 6 wherein each connector end portion defines an internal thread for engaging a corresponding thread on an outer surface of the respective tubing end portion.

10 8. The assembly of any of the preceding claims wherein the connector end portions define grooves to receive corresponding tongues provided on the tubing length end portions.

15 9. A method of connecting lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots, the method comprising:

providing a tubular connector defining overlapping longitudinal slots and comprising end portions;

20 providing lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and having end portions defining nodes beyond the ends of the slots; and

connecting the connector end portions to the nodes of respective end portions of the tubing lengths.

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10. An expandable tubing assembly comprising:

a tubular connector defining overlapping longitudinal slots, the connector comprising end portions and an intermediate portion; and

5 lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and having end portions coupled to the connector end portions, at least the connector intermediate portion being of corresponding configuration to the tubing lengths, such that the expansion characteristics of the
10 intermediate portion and the tubing lengths correspond.

11. An arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing, the arrangement comprising a sleeve defining overlapping longitudinal slots, first and second tubing lengths defining overlapping longitudinal slots, in use the
15 sleeve and tubing lengths being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, and connecting means for connecting the sleeve to the ends of the tubing lengths, the deformable fingers of the sleeve being axially spaced from the end most deformable fingers of the
20 respective tubing lengths.

12. The arrangement of claim 11, wherein the connecting means are provided at circumferentially spaced locations at the end of the tubing lengths beyond the end most tubing fingers, and at the ends of the sleeves beyond the
25 respective end most tubing fingers.

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13. The arrangement of claim 11 or 12, wherein the unexpanded sleeve is of larger diameter than the tubing lengths.

14. The arrangement of claim 13, wherein the sleeve and the tubing lengths are each of substantially constant diameter along their length.

15. A method for coupling the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap;

coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing such that the fingers of the sleeve are longitudinally spaced from the end most fingers of the tubing lengths; and

forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and the tubing lengths.

16. An arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing, the arrangement comprising a longitudinally slotted sleeve, first and second tubing lengths defining overlapping longitudinal slots, in use the tubing lengths being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of

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material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, and connecting means for connecting the sleeve to the ends of the tubing lengths.

17. The arrangement of claim 16, wherein the sleeve is formed of longitudinally extending strips of metal.

18. The arrangement of claim 17, wherein the strips are rectilinear.

19. The arrangement of claim 17 or 18, wherein the strips are initially circumferentially connected by frangible links.

20. A method for coupling the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve comprising longitudinally extending strips of material;

coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing; and

20 forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and tubing lengths.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Intern. and Application No
 PCT/GB 98/00863

4. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 6 E21B17/08 E21B43/10 E21B43/08 F16L13/14

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC
 5. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 IPC 6 E21B F16L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Description of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 96 37681 A (PETROLINE WIRELINE SERVICES LIMITED) 28 November 1996 see page 5, line 21 - page 7, line 2	1-3, 5-7, 9, 10
A		11, 15, 16, 20
X	WO 96 37680 A (SHELL INTERNATIONALE RESEARCH MAATSCHAPPIJ) 28 November 1996 see page 5, line 1 - page 6, line 22; figures 3, 4	1-3, 5-7, 9, 10
A	WO 93 25800 A (SHELL INTERNATIONALE RESEARCH MAATSCHAPPIJ) 23 December 1993 cited in the application	11, 15, 16, 20
		-/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *B* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *C* document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the public knowledge of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *D* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *E* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *F* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *G* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *H* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
- *I* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 July 1998

Date of filing of the international search report

24/07/1998

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Internat'l Application No
 PCT/GB 98/00863

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
WO 9637681 A	28-11-1996	AU 5826596 A AU 7349396 A WO 9637680 A EP 0828918 A EP 0824628 A NO 975348 A NO 975350 A		11-12-1996 11-12-1996 28-11-1996 18-03-1998 25-02-1998 23-01-1998 16-01-1998
WO 9637680 A	28-11-1996	AU 5826596 A AU 7349396 A EP 0828918 A EP 0824628 A WO 9637681 A NO 975348 A NO 975350 A		11-12-1996 11-12-1996 18-03-1998 25-02-1998 28-11-1996 23-01-1998 16-01-1998
WO 9325800 A	23-12-1993	AU 672008 B AU 4324593 A CA 2137565 A DE 69305852 D DE 69305852 T DK 643795 T EP 0643795 A JP 7507611 T MD 960219 A NO 944746 A NZ 253125 A US 5366012 A		19-09-1996 04-01-1994 23-12-1993 12-12-1996 22-05-1997 14-04-1997 22-03-1995 24-08-1995 31-05-1997 03-02-1995 27-02-1996 22-11-1994
WO 9721901 A	19-06-1997	AU 1068897 A		03-07-1997
WO 9822690 A	28-05-1998	NONE		

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY *-D AS*

From the
INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINING AUTHORITY

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PCT

NOTIFICATION OF TRANSMITTAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT
(PCT Rule 71.1)

Date of mailing:
(day/month/year)

19.07.99

Applicant's or agent's file reference
AS/HSP/08180PC

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.
PCT/GB98/00863

International filing date (day/month/year)
20/03/1998

Priority date (day/month/year)
21/03/1997

Applicant
PETROLINE WELLSYSTEMS LIMITED et al.

1. The applicant is hereby notified that this International Preliminary Examining Authority transmits herewith the international preliminary examination report and its annexes, if any, established on the international application.
2. A copy of the report and its annexes, if any, is being transmitted to the International Bureau for communication to all the elected Offices.
3. Where required by any of the elected Offices, the International Bureau will prepare an English translation of the report (but not of any annexes) and will transmit such translation to those Offices.

4. REMINDER

The applicant must enter the national phase before each elected Office by performing certain acts (filing translations and paying national fees) within 30 months from the priority date (or later in some Offices) (Article 39(1)) (see also the reminder sent by the International Bureau with Form PCT/I/301).

Where a translation of the international application must be furnished to an elected Office, that translation must contain a translation of any annexes to the international preliminary examination report. It is the applicant's responsibility to prepare and furnish such translation directly to each elected Office concerned.

For further details on the applicable time limits and requirements of the elected Offices, see Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

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PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference ASHS/PO8180PC		FOR FURTHER ACTION	
		See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/A/PEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/GB98/00863		International filing date (day/month/year) 20/03/1998	Priority date (day/month/year) 21/03/1997
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC E21B17/08			
Applicant PETROLINE WELLSYSTEMS LIMITED et al.			

<p>1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.</p> <p>2. This REPORT consists of a total of 7 sheets, including this cover sheet.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).</p> <p>These annexes consist of a total of 7 sheets.</p>
<p>3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report II <input type="checkbox"/> Priority III <input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability IV <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention V <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement VI <input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited VII <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application VIII <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 08/10/1998	Date of completion of this report 19.07.99
Name and mailing address of the International preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. (+49-89) 2399-0 Tx: 523556 epmu d Fax: (+49-89) 2399-4465	Authorized officer Bellincacci, F Telephone No. (+49-89) 2399 2784

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB98/00863

I. Basis of the report

1. This report has been drawn on the basis of (substitute sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to the report since they do not contain amendments.):

Description, pages:

2-13	as originally filed		
1	as received on	08/07/1999 with letter of	08/07/1999

Claims, No.:

1-15	as received on	01/06/1999 with letter of	27/05/1999
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Drawings, sheets:

1/2	as originally filed		
2/2	as received on	19/06/1999 with letter of	17/06/1999

2. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

the description, pages:
 the claims, Nos.: 16-20
 the drawings, sheets:

3. This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

4. Additional observations, if necessary:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB98/00863

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Yes: Claims 1-15
	No: Claims
Inventive step (IS)	Yes: Claims 4,5,11-15
	No: Claims 1-3, 6-10
Industrial applicability (IA)	Yes: Claims 1-15
	No: Claims

2. Citations and explanations

see separate sheet

VII. Certain defects in the International application

The following defects in the form or contents of the international application have been noted:

see separate sheet

VIII. Certain observations on the International application

The following observations on the clarity of the claims, description, and drawings or on the question whether the claims are fully supported by the description, are made:

see separate sheet

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB98/00863

Reference is made to the following documents:

D1 = WO,A,96/37680

D2 = WO,A,96/37681

V - Reasoned statement under Rule 66.2 (a)(ii)

V-1 D1, which is considered as the closest prior art, describes an expandable tubing assembly comprising:

- a tubular connector (page 4, lines 14-17 and claim 10) and
- lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots with nodes beyond the ends of the slots and having slotted end portions, the tubing being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap (fig. 3).

The further features of claim 1 are new and therefore the claim meets the novelty requirement of Art. 33(3) PCT.

V-2 D1 does not disclose how the tubular connector should be designed. The solution of a female sleeve joining the male ends of two joints of tubing is however disclosed in D1 as an alternative to a case where a female end of a joint of tubing is connected to male end of the next joint (page 4, lines 14-17). The skilled man will find therefore obvious to design the connection between the female end of the tubular connector and the male end of a joint of tubing in the same way as D1 teaches to design the connection between the female end of a joint of tubing and the male end of the adjacent joint of tubing.

In said connection:

- the female end is slotted;
- male and female parts are connected by connecting means located in the nodes of male and female parts;
- the end most deformable fingers of the female part are axially spaced from the end most deformable fingers of the tubing length (see fig. 3).

The skilled man will find therefore obvious to provide said features also in the

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connecting tubular, but in doing so he will reach a device as in claim 1. Claim 1 therefore does not meet the inventive step requirement of Art. 33(3) PCT.

It is further pointed out that the subject-matter of claim 1 could even be seen as lacking novelty in the light of D1, as claim 1 does not specify that the tubular connector has two female ends, whereby already a length of slotted tubing could be seen as a "tubular connector", connecting the two adjacent length of tubing as defined in claim 1. In the light of the description the term tubular connector has been interpreted however as comprising two female ends.

V-3 Connecting a female end and a male end of slotted tubing by means of threads machined on the nodes of the two parts is known, see page 3, lines 5-7 and 31-34 of D2. Given the similarity between the assembly of D1 and D2, the skilled man will find obvious to provide the device of D1 with said feature of D2, and claim 2 therefore does not involve an inventive step.

V-4 As it is apparent that it is advantageous to have a string of tubing with uniform characteristics, no inventive step can be seen in the subject-matter of claim 3.

V-5 None of the cited documents makes suggests to join length of slotted tubing by means of a tubular connector having upset ends. Claim 4, and the dependent claim 5, meet therefore the inventive step requirement of Art. 33(3) PCT.

V-6 The connection between tubing lengths as disclosed in D1 comprises a system of grooves (35) and tongues (36), and therefore the subject-matter of claim 6 does not involve an inventive step.

V-7 The features of claims 7 and 8 are essentially identical to the ones of claims 1, whereby also said claims do not meet the inventive step requirements of Art. 33(3) PCT.

V-8 Claim 9 specifies an obvious ways for designing a connecting sleeve, and therefore the claim does not involve an inventive step.

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V-9 Claim 10 specifies an obvious method for connecting lengths of slotted tubing by means of a connector as in claim 1. As claim 1 does not meet the inventive step requirement of Art. 33(3) PCT, the same applies to claim 10.

V-10 D1, by merely suggesting that two length of slotted tubing can be connected by means of a sleeve, does not make obvious to join the two length by means of strips of material or by means of a sleeve with upset ends. As also the other documents in the proceedings do not make obvious said solution, independent claims 11, 14 and 15, and related dependent claims 12 and 13, meet the requirement of Art. 33(2) PCT.

V-12 Finally, it is pointed out that WO,A, 98/22590 has an effective filing date (i.e. a priority date) earlier than the filing date of the present application but it was published after said date. The document therefore is not part of the prior art as defined in Rule 64.1 PCT. It is however possible that the document could be considered as part of the prior art, at least as far a novelty is concerned, by some national or international authority.

VII - Certain defects

VII-1 The independent claims are not properly cast in the two part form, with those features which in combination are part of the prior art (D1) being placed in the preamble, contrary to the requirements of Rule 6.3(b) PCT.

VII-2 The features of the claims are not provided with reference signs placed in parentheses (Rule 6.2(b) PCT).

VII-3 The statement in the description, page 13, last paragraph, does not meet the requirements of Art. 6 PCT as interpreted in the PCT Guidelines, PCT/GL/3 III, 4.3a.

VIII - Certain observations (clarity)

VIII-1 To satisfy the conciseness requirement of Art. 6 PCT the set of claims should include only the minimum necessary number of independent claims in any one

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International application No. PCT/GB98/00863

category. Said requirement is not satisfied by claims 1, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, as in the present case it is considered appropriate to use only one independent claim in any category.

EXPANDABLE SLOTTED TUBING SPlicing AND METHOD FOR
CONNECTING SUCH A TUBING SPlicing

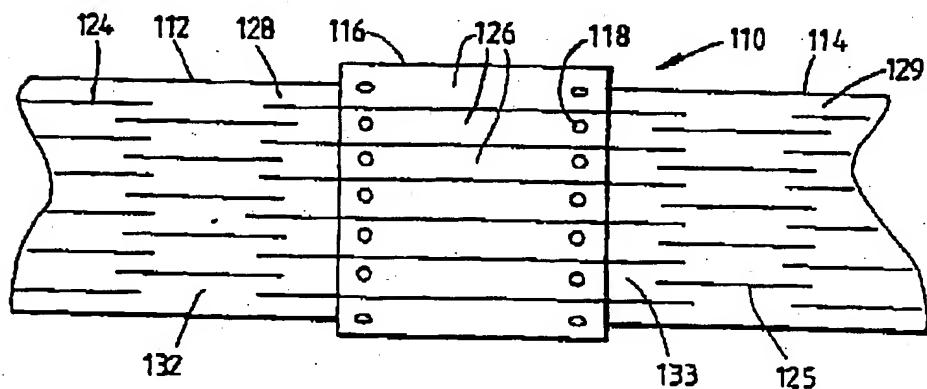
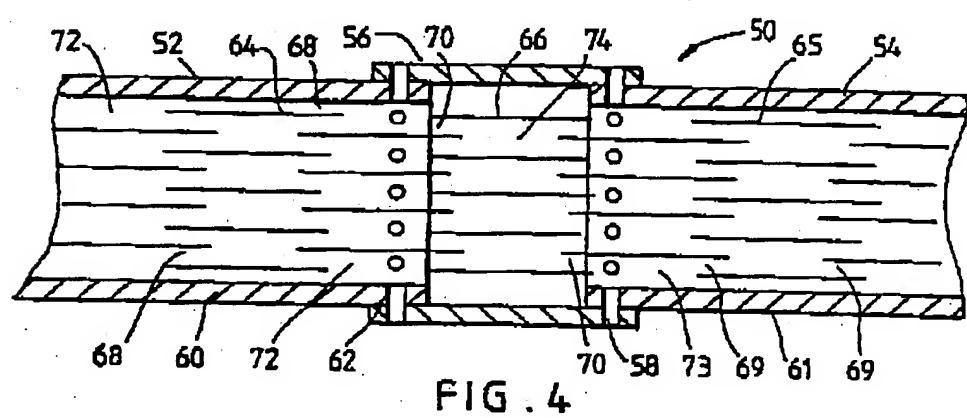
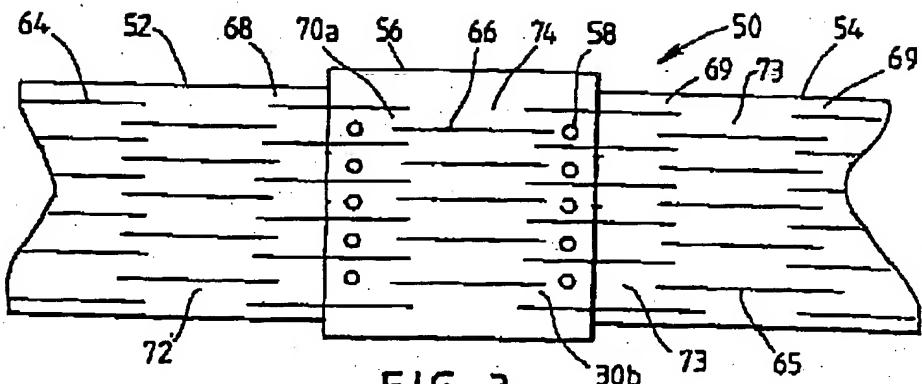
This invention relates to a connector, and in particular to a connector forming part of an expandable tubing assembly. The invention also relates to a method of connecting lengths of expandable tubing.

5 WO93\25800 describes expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots. On expansion of the tubing, by pushing or pulling a mandrel through the tubing, the slots expand to form diamond-shaped apertures. The expansion is accommodated by deformation of the fingers of metal between the slots, this deformation taking place predominantly at the slot ends, and also by circumferential extension of the parts of the tubing wall beyond the slot ends. In expandable tubing developed by the applicants radial expansion is achieved with the parts of the tubing wall between and beyond the slot ends experiencing little if any deformation, these parts being known as the tubing "nodes".

20 Arrangements for connecting lengths of slotted tubing are disclosed in WO96\37681 and WO97\21901, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference. Both of these documents describe arrangements in which the end of one length of tubing defines a male coupling portion which is received within a female coupling portion on the other length of tubing and attached thereto.

25 In another coupling arrangement, the ends of the tubing lengths are received within an external coupling

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CLAIMS

1. An expandable tubing assembly comprising:

5 a tubular connector defining overlapping longitudinal slots and comprising an intermediate portion located between slotted end portions, the connector being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material in the intermediate portion where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, and

10 lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots with nodes beyond the ends of the slots and having slotted end portions, the tubing being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap,

15 the connector end portions being coupled to the nodes of respective end portions of the tubing lengths and the deformable fingers of the sleeve being axially spaced from the end most deformable fingers of the respective tubing lengths.

2. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the connector end portions and the nodes of the tubing end portions are threaded.

20 3. The assembly of claim 1 or 2 wherein the intermediate portion is of corresponding configuration of the tubing lengths, such that the expansion characteristics of the

15

connected tubing assembly are substantially constant over the connection.

4. The assembly of claim 3, wherein the connector intermediate portion is of substantially the same wall thickness of the tubing and wherein the connector end portions are upset.

5. The assembly of claim 4 wherein each connector end portion defines an internal thread for engaging a corresponding thread on an outer surface of the respective tubing end portion.

10 6. The assembly of any of the preceding claims wherein the connector end portions define grooves to receive corresponding tongues provided on the tubing length and portions.

15 7. An arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing, the arrangement comprising:

20 a sleeve defining overlapping longitudinal slots and being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap;

first and second tubing lengths defining overlapping longitudinal slots and being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap; and

AMENDMENT SHEET

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connecting means for connecting the sleeve to the ends of the tubing lengths, ends of the tubing lengths being received by respective ends of the sleeve,

5 the deformable fingers of the sleeve being axially spaced from the end most deformable fingers of the respective tubing lengths.

8. The arrangement of claim 7, wherein the connecting means are provided at circumferentially spaced locations at the end of the tubing lengths beyond the end most tubing 10 fingers, and at the ends of the sleeves beyond the respective end most tubing fingers.

9. The arrangement of claim 7 or 8, wherein the sleeve and the tubing lengths are each of substantially constant diameter along their length.

15 10. A method of coupling the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing and expanding the coupled tubing lengths, the method comprising the steps of:

20 providing a sleeve defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap;

providing first and second lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap;

25 coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second

AMENDED DRAFT

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lengths of expandable tubing such that the fingers of the sleeve are longitudinally spaced from the end most fingers of the tubing lengths; and

5 forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and the tubing lengths.

11. An arrangement for coupling lengths of expandable tubing, the arrangement comprising: a sleeve of longitudinally extending strips of metal; first and second tubing lengths defining overlapping longitudinal slots and being radially expandable by deformation of fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap; and connecting means for connecting the sleeve to the ends of the tubing lengths.

15 12. The arrangement of claim 11, wherein the strips are rectilinear.

13. The arrangement of claim 11 or 12, wherein the strips are initially circumferentially connected by frangible links.

20 14. A method for coupling the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and deformable fingers of material where adjacent circumferentially spaced slots overlap, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a sleeve comprising longitudinally extending

strips of material;

coupling the sleeve to the ends of first and second lengths of expandable tubing; and

forcing an expansion member through the connected tubing lengths to expand the sleeve and tubing lengths.

15. An expandable tubing assembly comprising:

a tubular connector defining overlapping longitudinal slots and comprising an intermediate portion between slotted upset end portions; and

lengths of expandable tubing defining overlapping longitudinal slots and having slotted end portions defining nodes beyond the ends of the slots, the connector end portions being coupled to the nodes of respective end portions of the tubing lengths,

the connector intermediate portion being of substantially the same wall thickness as the tubing, such that the expansion characteristics of the connected tubing assembly are substantially constant over the connection.

